

BY TED CUSHMAN



The Traveling Timber Frame

Most vendors who come to an outdoor trade show set up a tent, or maybe a booth inside a tent. Timber framer and custom builder Richard Krouse brings along a barn. And why not? The barn's not just his booth—it's also his product.

JLC caught up with Krouse at the Common Ground Fair in Unity, Maine, an annual event put on by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). As the name implies, MOFGA and its annual get-together are mostly focused on locally produced food and handicrafts. But the fair also plays host to a goodly collection of construction companies and related trades. This year, for example, *JLC* had a chance to talk with reps from Portland-based Revision Energy, Vassalboro-based Duratherm Windows (and sister company York Spiral Stair), Pittston-based house-moving contractor Jewett Builders, and Belfast zero-energy builder and developer GO-Logic, among others.

Based in Arundel, Maine, Krouse and his company, R. A. Krouse, go back a long way with MOFGA and the Common Ground fair. Krouse built the 60-foot-by-80-foot

custom frame for the organization's main gathering hall at the fairgrounds back in 1999 (1). This year, Krouse set up a simple, 18-foot-by-20-foot frame with the help of son Christopher Krouse, carpenter Toby Swanson, and an occasional MOFGA volunteer. Chris and Toby assembled roof bents on the company's flatbed truck (2), and gave the timbers a quick lick of linseed oil just before assembling the frame (3). Wife Toni Krouse came along to help decorate the booth and schmooze with fairgoers (4). After the fair, the crew banded the frame apart (5), loaded it back on the truck along with their scale model (6), and headed home.

After a busy three-day weekend greeting fairgoers, the Krouse family was more than ready to pack up and go home. Nobody decided to buy Krouse's show barn on the spot (which sometimes does happen, he said). But the weekend's fine weather had brought more than 10,000 people out to the fair, and Krouse had made plenty of good connections.

Ted Cushman is a senior editor at JLC.

Photos by Ted Cushman